

**GARLAND COUNTY, ARKANSAS
SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES, PUBLIC
WORKS, AND BUILDINGS/PUBLIC HEALTH WELFARE, AND SAFETY
COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 24, 2025
MINUTES**

Members Present - ESPWB Committee:

Chairman Young, Vice-Chairman Hunter, Justices Bailes, Hooten, Braughton, Peters, and Edds

Members Present - PHWS Committee:

Chairman Myers, Vice-Chairman Peters, Justices Young, Floyd, McGrew, Brown, and Anderson

Members Absent: Justice Brown

Also Present: Citizens, elected officials, staff, and media

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Young called the meeting to order. Justice Braughton led the invocation.

AGENDA ITEMS:

Building Projects Update

Chairman Young invited Judge Mahoney to provide an update on ongoing building projects, specifically the Terracotta project and the Senior Citizen Center project.

1. Senior Citizens Center Project:

Judge Mahoney reported that the Senior Citizens Center project has been underway for some time. Initial efforts to convert an existing building were unsuccessful due to space and location limitations. Currently, the Union Missionary Baptist Church operates a Senior Center three days a week, with Meals on Wheels services still provided from the McAuley Center.

The proposed location for the new Senior Center is at the corner of Nash and McGowan, on land previously used as a sports field. After overcoming delays and working with CHI, the site has been identified, and a title search is in progress. The county is negotiating a 49-year lease with CHI, which may include options for renewal or purchase. The project is expected to begin by mid-year, with a potential completion date by the end of 2025. Chairman Young suggested including public transportation options for the Senior Center, and Judge Mahoney agreed that it would be an important consideration.

2. Courthouse Renovation (Exterior):

Judge Mahoney provided an update on the courthouse exterior renovation, which began in 2018. The focus has been on replacing damaged terracotta due to public safety concerns. The western side of the courthouse is nearly completed, with the southern side next in line. A \$21,000 change order was approved for repairs to the A-frames. The

project is funded by a \$165,000 grant, with completion expected by March 2025. Work schedules are dependent on court activities.

3. **HVAC and Energy Efficiency Projects:**

Judge Mahoney reported on the HVAC system upgrades at the courthouse, noting that many units date back to the 1980s. The courthouse received a \$77,030 Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant, which will help replace older units, including those in the courtrooms. Due to the complexity of working around court schedules, the replacement will be a lengthy process.

4. **Courthouse Plumbing System:**

The courthouse plumbing system is outdated, with a mix of galvanized, copper, and PVC pipes. Ongoing issues include blockages and leaks. A preliminary estimate for replacing the plumbing throughout the courthouse is \$700,000, with \$500,000 budgeted for 2025. Work will need to be completed at night and on weekends to minimize disruptions to courthouse operations.

5. **Courthouse Flooring and Ceiling Project:**

Judge Mahoney highlighted the need for extensive renovations to the courthouse flooring and ceilings. The goal is to restore the original flooring and improve security by installing a hardened area for deputies. The courthouse's aging infrastructure requires ongoing repairs, and efforts are underway to secure funding for the necessary work, including applying for an AHPP grant.

6. **District Court HVAC, Flooring, and Generator:**

The District Court building, shared with the City of Hot Springs, has several maintenance challenges. HVAC issues persist despite geothermal system replacement in 2015. The building's plumbing has also been problematic. This year, the County has budgeted for carpet replacement and the installation of a full generator, which will help ensure operations during power outages.

7. **Woodbine Parking Lot:**

The parking lot project on Woodbine near the Sheriff's Office, with a budget of \$500,000, aims to add 52-53 parking spaces. The project includes designated spots for trucks, trailers, and loaner vehicles, as well as security measures such as fencing and lighting. To date, approximately \$130,000 has been spent on demolition. The project is expected to be completed within the next few months.

8. **Southwest Trail Development:**

Judge Mahoney provided an update on the Southwest Trail, which began in 2016 with funding from an economic development grant. The first phase of the trail has been completed, and the next phase will extend the trail using available funding from ARDOT. A significant part of the project involves replacing the historic Slaughter Bridge, which is part of a federal replacement program. Property acquisitions are required, but efforts are being made to avoid displacing businesses or homeowners. The bridge replacement is expected to occur around 2026.

9. **Safe Room Grant:**

Judge Mahoney updated the committee on the safe room project, which has been delayed due to funding issues and COVID-19. The project is designed to blend with the courthouse and will be located next to the Sheriff's Office. Despite initial estimates placing the cost at \$568,000, bids have consistently exceeded \$1 million. A reapplication

for FEMA funding overages was submitted, and the Judge is optimistic that the project will proceed soon.

10. Phase 3 Landfill Project:

The landfill project involves clearing 11 acres for expansion, with a budget of \$650,000 for this year. Groundwater levels must be carefully monitored, and regulatory compliance is essential. The expansion aims to prevent frequent expansions and ensure long-term landfill operations.

11. 70 West Transfer Station:

After a fire in April 2023, the 70 West Transfer Station underwent temporary repairs, including bringing in electrical power and adding a porta-potty. Plans to expand the facility are about 70% complete, with the goal of moving into the new building by mid-March 2025.

12. AWIN Aviate Microwave Project:

The county is working to improve its public safety communication system through the AWIN Aviate Microwave project. This will link the dispatch center to Jack Mountain and form a communication loop, ensuring better reliability. The project is funded by ARPA and is expected to cost around \$1.3 million. The county is collaborating with the City of Hot Springs to reduce costs.

13. Bidirectional Amplifiers with Local School Districts:

The county is equipping local schools with bidirectional amplifiers to improve communication during emergencies. This initiative was prompted by communication failures during the January 2023 tornado. The program, funded through the American Rescue Plan, will ensure that law enforcement and fire departments can communicate with schools during emergencies.

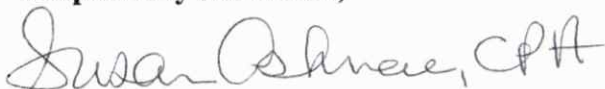
DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS:

Chairman Myers inquired about the plans for the property purchased on West Grand. Judge Mahoney provided an update, explaining that the county plans to use part of the property for District Court parking. The property was previously acquired for future growth, and while the parking lot may not be needed immediately, the project is moving forward. The county has entered into agreements with tenants, including a ministry.

ADJOURNMENT:

Chairman Myers adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,



Susan Ashmore, CPA
Garland County Comptroller